1989

Art

Carmen Leon's painting hangs in the County Building.

Computers show their creative side

By STEPHEN WILTSE
Sentinel correspondent

MACHINES in art have always been viewed with suspicion. Artists have barely come to terms with the camera when along comes the computer.

"Alternate Applications/Computer Technology in the Arts," currently on display at the Sesnon Gallery, shows some of the directions computer generated art is taking. It continues the gallery's tradition of presenting challenging and thought-provoking exhibitions.

The artists in this show who work in artificial intelligence are especially impressive and intriguing.

Harold Cohen has developed a computer program that generates drawings based on "cognitive principles" that emulate what human beings do when they make visual representations. AARON, as this visual experiement is called, is capable of creating orginal artwork alone, without any human interaction.

The pieces by AARON (still attributed to Cohen) are not the fuzzy TV-closeup shots usually associated with computer generated art. They're appealing line drawings with a distinct style.

Artists have always assumed, somewhat smugly, that there is something uniquely mysterious and subjective about what they do that can never be replicated by machines.

When one considers that this technology is still in its infancy, the idea put forth several years ago, that someday someone would develop a program for portraits by Rembrant, no longer seems so farfetched.

The background music for this show was also composed by a computer.

According to the exhibition catalogue, EMI (Experiments in Musical Intelligence) was conceived in 1981 by **David Cope** during a bout of "composer's block" attending a commission he had to fulfill.

By 1987 he was able to come up with short examples of EMI output by Mozart and other composers. "Responses to EMI's compositions have ranged from shock and outrage to delight." Recent compositions include "Mozart in Bali" combining the similar "signature dictionaries" of Mozart and Asita, a Balinese composer.

Andrea Hesse, who curated this exhibit, says in the catalogue, "In listening to the artists discuss their work there is ... a common interest in developing technological applications through the evaluation of ancient sources. It is as though the vocabulary has always existed, and only recently been recognized as our own voice."

The centerpiece of this show, is a lifesized mummy-like figure by local artist **Gloria Alford** constructed from approximately 2,400 electronic circuit boards tied together with copper wire. Titled "The Jaded Princess," it embodies the synthesis of ancient and futuristic elements.

The works on display by **Susan Felter** and **Eleanor Kent** are attractive conventional photographs of computer-generated images.

The "Sculpture" by **Alan Rath** elevates the computer itself to art. **Milissa Panages** explores the potential for jewerelry and ornamentation using discarded computer parts.

While the computer, with its vast power as a communicative resource, is an exciting new tool in the hands of artists, for the insecure there's always the question of whether we're the masters or to what extent the machines have mastered us.

"Alternate Applications/Computer Technology in the Arts" will run through Dec. 10 at the Sesnon Gallery, Porter College, UC Santa Cruz. Hours are 11 a.m.-5 p.m. Call 459-2314 for more information.

* * *

SMITH GALLERY — "An Understanding With the Hills" features local landscapes by **Marge Dickson, Deborah Eddy, Howard Eddy, Aaron Johnson, Victoria Sulski** and **Kitty Wallis.** It opens with a reception from 2-4 p.m. Sunday. Through Dec. 15 at Smith College, UCSC. Hours are 11 a.m.-5 p.m. Tuesday -Sunday. 459-2953.

* * *

BULKHEAD GALLERY — Paintings and drawings by **Dan Gee** and **Tom Hernandez** opens with a **reception 7-9 tonight.** Through Dec. 2 at 129 Bulkhead near the town clock. Hours are 1-6 p.m. Friday-Sunday. 458-1134.

* * *

COUNTY BUILDING — On the first floor **Carmen Leon** exhibits a series of mixed media paintings inspired by her travels to Peru and Mexico and **Silvia Carballo** displays images from her native Cuba in watercolor, acrylic and pastels. There's a **reception 7-9 tonight on the first floor.**

In the first and fifth floor display cases **Roy Johnson** shows wall lamps of copper, wood, brass and slumped glass along with a recent handcrafted table.

The second floor display cases feature handblown glass by **David Salazar** done with classic techniques such as murrini, millefiori

Please see Page 13